

read of the destruction of the old club house of the Maryland Jockey Club at Pimlico, a structure filled with the treasures and the lore of horse racing in our State. Articles that are irreplaceable were destroyed in that blaze. And it should be emphasized that this fire, like all others, was preventable and should not have occurred.

Fire is at once man's kindest friend and his deadliest enemy. Whether he reaps the reward of friendship or falls victim to the deadly hostility depends entirely upon how he uses the terrible force. In the mythology of the ancient Greeks, civilization, as we know, began with the discovery of fire. Prometheus, it was said, stole fire from heaven and bestowed it upon man, thus conferring upon him some of the gifts of the gods. But the ancients also detected the other property of fire — its destructiveness — and used it to symbolize the ultimate force of evil — the fires of hell.

This insight into the good and the evil properties of fire is evident in all that we see about us. Life without fire of course is unthinkable. And also we know that fire, in the dreadful form of a thermonuclear blast, is capable of destroying not only civilization, but mankind itself. And so, we must treat fire with awe and respect. If treated properly and carefully, it can be our closest friend and helper. But if left unreined and uncontrolled, it is capable of destroying us. How we handle fires — for good or evil, for benefit or harm — will depend, in some measure at least, upon how you, as career fire fighters, exercise your duties. With the skill and knowledge you possess, coupled with the zeal I know you have to do that which is right, I am confident that we will succeed in improving our control of fires and in harnessing their force for the benefit of ourselves and of those who will come after us.

Let me say, in conclusion, that I sincerely appreciate the hospitality I have received here at this 1966 convention of the Maryland State Firemen's Association. This gathering, like all the others before it, is for me a reunion — a reunion with old friends who share with me an interest in fire prevention and an enthusiasm for the machinery which we have set up in our State for fire protection — our fire departments, paid and volunteer. As your Governor, I commend you heartily on the excellence of your work, and I encourage you to continue your public-spirited efforts to safeguard the lives of the people of our State. As an old fire fighter, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for affording me this opportunity to join with you here in the spirit of brotherhood and good-fellowship.